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Date	Event
February	Library Lovers' Month
Feb 23— March 3	Freedom to Read Week
Feb 24-28	Read Me Week
Apr 23	MSL Commission Meeting, Butte
Apr 23-26	MLA Conference at the Copper King Convention Center - Butte
May 12-13	American Library Association Legislative Days
Jun 11	MSL Commission Meeting, Bozeman
Jul 4	Independence Day

BIG SKY LIBRARIES

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Potential Budget Cuts Threaten Services in Montana's Libraries

The 2003 legislative session started with a surprise move by legislators which reverted state agency budgets back to 2000 base budget levels. This move, coupled with previous reductions from the Governor's Office, equals a 1.25 million dollar decrease in state funding for the State Library. Legislators were attempting to balance the state's General Fund budget.

This amounts to a total 26% decrease from MSL's current budget.

If these reductions are approved, they would take effect July 1, 2003. What would the reductions mean for the agency and local libraries? For MSL, the cuts would reduce the funding for materials by half and potentially lead to a loss of at least four employees. A large portion of MSL's budget are fixed costs, including telecommunications, rent, utilities, maintenance, and salaries. These expenses cannot be reduced, according to the Legislature. This means that the cuts have to come from other areas, such as personnel and materials.

The impacts on local libraries and communities would be as follows:

- State funding for federations would be eliminated. The law establishing federations would not be changed, but the funding would not be available.
- About half of the state funding for per capita/per square mile would be eliminated. These funds are allocated to public libraries.
- About half of the state funding for the interlibrary loan reimbursement program would be lost.
- The General Fund portion of the costs for the periodical database (InfoTrac) would be eliminated.

Such cuts would have negative impacts on other statewide programs, such as the contract for OCLC services, as some public libraries use federation funding or direct state aid to pay for their shares of the contract.

Watch for updates on legislative impacts to Montana's libraries via Wired MT and in future issues of Big Sky Libraries.

Commissioner Al Randall Instrumental to Library Development

By Dorothy Laird, former MSL Commissioner.

As many of you are aware, Al Randall, director of the Lincoln County Public Library, has announced his intention to retire from that position. We are fortunate that he will continue to serve on the Montana State Library Commission and that he will continue to be an advocate for Montana's libraries.

Al has been involved in many different aspects of library development in Montana. As the librarian at Libby High School, he was proactive in finding ways to improve school library service. Al encouraged libraries to participate in the Western Library Network, and stressed the importance of the school library media center in providing quality education.

With Al's involvement and encouragement, projects in Lincoln County demonstrated that the best way to provide library service to the most people with available funds was through cooperation among all types of libraries. Mary Hudspeth, retired Lincoln County Superintendent of Schools, worked closely with Al on those projects. She said, "Al always sees the big picture of providing service and seems to be several projects ahead of where he is operating." Al recognized that people could be served more effectively through the use of technology, and as a member of the Network-

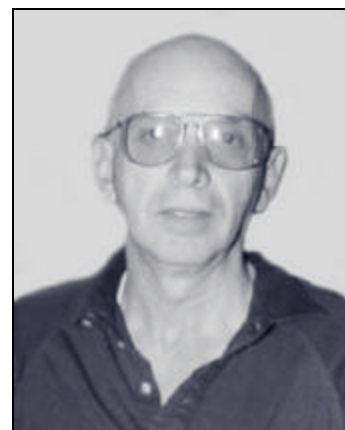
ing Task Force, he has encouraged technology for all Montana libraries.

Al's knowledge of libraries is extensive, and he has frequently mentored other librarians.

Greta Chapman, director of the public library in Rapid City, South Dakota, was one of his students at Libby High School. Greta commented, "Al is what all librarians should strive to be — just plain good at their jobs." His daughter, Kay, followed him into the library profession and is now a librarian in the Troy School District.

According to Carol Wayland-Smith, Systems Librarian for the Lincoln County Public Library, Al was just what the library needed when he accepted the position of library director. Prior to that post, Al served as a member of the Lincoln County Public Library Board of Trustees.

Al intends to take time for the things he loves, such as fishing, canoeing, and hiking. He will spend time traveling with his wife, Marbie, and then he will be back on Montana's library scene keeping the rest of us on our toes.



Al Randall, MSL Commissioner



"Al is what all librarians should strive to be — just plain good at their jobs."

Clarification

The Talking Book Library would like a clarification offered to the MSL 2002 Annual Report regarding the definition of its eligible patrons. The Annual Report referenced "physical disabilities" as the only eligible disability for Montana Talking Book patrons. Nothing has changed regarding the eligibility requirements for TBL patrons.

The full description of eligibility requirements still states that TBL "provides reading material to eligible

blind, low vision, physical or reading disabled Montanans." The full TBL description should read: "So the eligible blind, low vision, physical or reading disabled Montanans have the same access to information and the enjoyment of reading as everyone else."

Questions should be directed to Christie Briggs, TBL Regional Librarian, at 444-5399.

Montana Participates in National Book Festival



by Bette Ammon, Missoula Public Library Director

Attending the 2nd annual National Book Festival in October as Montana's representative was a delight and an honor. My husband, Randy, and I arrived in Washington DC the day before the festivities. We hiked to the Capitol Mall to check out the digs and discovered the place awash with white tents and rain. We found Montana's table beneath the Pavilion of the States tent, nestled in the mud between the Missouri and Nebraska tables. Other tents featured authors, readings, book signings, storytelling, and more.

Fortunately, the next day, the rain had stopped and the mud was covered with a carpet. The talented folks at Montana State Library provided us with a nifty display, along with a cowboy tablecloth; tiny boots to hold giveaway pencils, pens, and fans; and cowboy hats filled with Montana cowboy hat pins, Monte Dolack literacy postcards, and bookmarks. Several people commented that Montana had the best booth.

Security was tight and some feared the recent local sniper activity would keep the crowds away. But the book is a powerful attraction — over 40,000 people attended. Many of those folks made it to the Pavilion of the States. They picked up a colorful map of the United States and carried it from table to table accumulating stamps — many of which represented book characters.

Those who came to the Montana table (and there were thousands) stamped a grizzly bear inside the outline of the state of Montana. To represent Montana's rugged individualistic spirit, we encouraged kids to stamp their own griz and most were pleased to do so. The back of the map included a bibliography of books representing each state. We also distributed a bookmark listing some of our many gifted Montana authors.

The National Book Festival was organized and sponsored by the Library of Congress. Montana was able to send a representative thanks to a COSLA grant. The event, designed to celebrate and encourage literacy and libraries, was covered live on C-SPAN 2's Book TV.



Bette Ammon helps this Washington D.C. area student find more information about Montana for a class project. Photo: Randy Ammon

Statewide Weed Information Now Available

By: Coburn Currier, NHP

As many Montanans know, we have a severe noxious weed problem in our state. The Natural Heritage Program (NHP) has recently been invited to sit on the Montana Noxious Weed Mapping Task Force. As part of that effort, NHP and Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) staff have worked with the Montana Department of Agriculture to make statewide weed mapping data available via the Web through the NRIS Thematic Mapper.

In 1997, the Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund requested that the Weed Survey and Mapping System Project at Montana State University take on a special activity, focused on surveying the distribution of five important noxious

weeds in Montana counties. The section-based project provides statewide data more quickly than a detailed mapping effort.

The project was created with several goals in mind:

- To produce useful distribution data for leafy spurge, Dalmatian toadflax, sulfur cinquefoil, Russian knapweed, and spotted knapweed;
- To record for each section in each county the status of each of the weeds: present, absent or status unknown;
- To accurately calculate the total number of sections infested for the five selected weeds; and
- To provide the results on section-based maps for each county. (*From the Montana Noxious Weed Survey and Mapping System website at <http://www.montana.edu/places/mtweeds/>*)

The NRIS Thematic Mapper now includes statewide information on five Category I noxious weeds: Russian knapweed, Dalmatian toadflax, leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, and sulfur cinquefoil. Visit <http://nris.state.mt.us/mapper/> to view the section-based weed information. NRIS and NHP are working with Department of Ag personnel to include additional species, so users will want to re-visit the site.



List of new reports on the NHP website <http://nhp.nris.state.mt.us/>

- *Montana 2003 Animal Species of Concern List*
- *Sensitive Plant Species in Weed Management Areas on the Helena National Forest – Final Report, December 2002*
- *Plant Species of Concern and Plant Associations of Powder River County, Montana, October 2002*
- *Movements and Mortality of American White Pelicans Fledged in Three Montana Colonies, June 2002*
- *Ecological Communities on the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge: Inventory and Review of Aspen and Wetland Systems, June 2002*
- *Ecological Inventory of Wetland Sites in the Thompson-Fisher Conservation Easement, May 2002*
- *Baseline Survey for Astragalus barrii Barneby (Barr's Milkvetch) and Physaria didymocarpa var. lanata A. Nels (Woolly Twinpod) in Eastern Big Horn and Southwestern Rosebud Counties, Montana, February 2002*

New Library Association Formed

After many years of work, the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship at Clarion University of Pennsylvania has announced the formation of the Association of Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL). The association intends to organize individuals concerned with the development of these libraries and provide an opportunity for members' continuing education.

ARSL is a virtual association which will meet annually at a physical location. Membership entitles participants to review copies of reports, policies, and surveys; get on-line access to rural libraries; and gain the ability to post position openings. ARSL membership is \$39 annually. Register on-line at <http://arsl.clarion.edu>.

Library Evening Successful

By: Anastasia Burrton, MSL

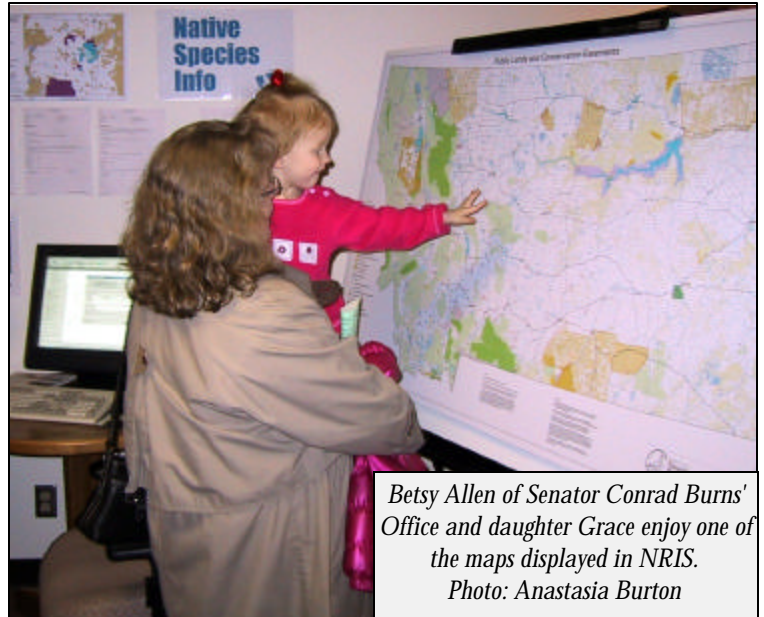


Commissioner Al Randall presents Senator Glenn Roush of Cut Bank with a certificate of appreciation. Photo: Jim Hill

A strong turnout of 45 legislators, in addition to many lobbyists, librarians, library staff, and state agency directors marked a successful reception held recently to meet and inform guests about the importance of our libraries.

"An Evening @ Montana's Libraries" was held on January 14 at the Montana State Library in Helena. Sponsored by the Bibliographical Center for Research, the Montana Library Association, the Montana Association for the Blind, and the Nature Conservancy, the reception included hands-on information demonstrations, a BBQ dinner, and entertainment by Helena's own Queen City Belles.

In addition, the evening offered an opportunity for expressions of appreciation. Senator Glenn Roush of Cut Bank was awarded a certificate from the MSL Commission for his support of libraries. After last year's one-day special legislative session, Senator Roush donated his per-diem pay to the libraries in his district.



Betsy Allen of Senator Conrad Burns' Office and daughter Grace enjoy one of the maps displayed in NRIS. Photo: Anastasia Burton

Chuck Gordon, State Soil Scientist from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, presented the Library's Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) with a certificate of appreciation for the strong inter-agency cooperation and information sharing that exists between the two entities. NRIS Director Jim Hill accepted the award on behalf of NRIS.

State Librarian Karen Strege thanked everyone who planned or participated in the events for their hard work.



John Heldt, Government Information Specialist, helps Representative Don Hedges of Antelope with an information request. Photo: Anastasia Burton

Trustee Video Available

By: Sue Jackson, MSL

Last fall, the Montana State Library hosted two library trustee workshops featuring Pat Wagner, consultant with Denver-based Pattern Research. Following the workshop, Pat sat down with MSL's Suzanne Reymer and informally discussed trustee and board issues. A video copy of this discussion is now available on interlibrary loan.

Entitled *"Twenty Trustee Questions with Pat Wagner,"* the 64-minute video and accompanying handout provide excellent information about trustee recruitment and responsibilities, board governance models, and other important trustee-related issues. "If you were unable to attend one of Pat's workshops, this video will give you an introduction to the information she presented. The video can be viewed individually, but would also be an excellent tool to have at a board meeting for trustees to view and discuss as a group," said Sue Jackson, MSL Continuing Education Coordinator.

Production of the video was funded by Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant funds that are administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the Montana State Library Commission.


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